

Abstract 623

TITLE: Counseling and Testing Changes the Nature of Outreach: Implication for HIV Prevention Planning

AUTHORS: Orlando Garcia, MPH; Charles W. Mueller, Ph.D.; and Jayne Bopp, MPH

ISSUE: Historically, peer outreach intervention has been identified as a major component in providing risk reduction messages to hard-to reach clients. The availability of new testing technology (OraSure) and the integration of counseling and testing (C/T) into outreach intervention has created new challenges, bringing about important issues to consider for program planning and implementation.

SETTING: In 1997, the Hawaii Department of Health made OraSure testing available to Community-Base Organizations (CBOs) under contract to provide HIV C/T services to hard-to-reach groups. Over the course of the first year of implementation, one particular CBO tested over 260 MSM in different settings including local bars, PSE, sex clubs, beaches, and clients' homes.

PROJECT: This paper focuses on one aspect of a CBO program evaluation concerning outreach C/T geared towards MSM in Hawaii. As part of the program evaluation, authors collaborated in obtaining data from staff members implementing the C/T services. A semi-structured, ninety-minute tape-recorded staff interview was conducted to assess their perceptions of OraSure testing out on the field. Issues addressed throughout the interviews were based on a framework, which divided the program into three major components: initial client contact, pre-test C/T, and post-test counseling.

RESULTS: The overall evaluation indicated that the outreach C/T program was successful in reaching the intended risk population. However, the integration of C/T into street outreach seems to have created challenges that can change the nature of outreach and bring about important issues to consider, such as counselor/client relationship boundaries, the trade off between intense work with few clients compared to less intense work with many clients, and the way C/T can create the need for careful safety consideration and staff support and training. While these issues have always been a part of outreach work, the addition of C/T has brought them more into the foreground.

LESSONS LEARNED: Community Based Organizations that implement outreach C/T should consider identifying new models, guidelines, and procedures relating to managing counselor/client boundaries, outreach workers time investment, and safety and liability issues. Outreach workers should also be provided with continued training and support, particularly related to the challenges that counseling and testing brings about during outreach intervention.

PRESENTER CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Orlando Garcia

Address: P.O. Box 15342
Honolulu, Hawaii 96815

Telephone: (808) 946-4261

E-mail: Jude430@aol.com